



From Findings to Practice – Workforce Resources for Non- Profit Housing Providers

Purpose of These Documents

This set of handouts was developed to support individual non-profit housing societies in understanding and responding to workforce challenges identified through the Labour Market Challenges and Solutions Study. The documents translate study findings into practical, employer-relevant insights related to recruitment, retention, training access, burnout and workforce sustainability.

Together, the handouts provide a shared evidence-based reference that housing societies can use to reflect on their own workforce context, recognizing that organizations differ widely in size, region, mandate and capacity.

How These Documents Can Be Used

Housing societies are encouraged to use these materials as starting points for discussion and inquiry to consider how broad sector trends may (or may not) be showing up locally and how those trends interact with existing organizational priorities. Used this way, the handouts can help strengthen alignment between evidence, planning and conversation across the sector, while respecting the diversity of housing societies and the realities they operate within.

Housing societies may find these resources useful in several ways, including:

- **Contextualizing local experience** by comparing organizational staffing realities with sector-wide workforce trends.
- **Supporting internal conversations** among leadership, boards, managers and staff about recruitment pressures, retention risks and training needs.
- **Informing planning discussions** related to onboarding, succession, professional development and supervision.
- **Framing external conversations** with funders, training institutions, partners, or sector collaborators using shared evidence rather than anecdote.
- **Identifying which issues are most relevant locally**, recognizing that not all workforce challenges affect all organizations in the same way.



Scope of These Resources

The handouts are designed to be used individually or together, depending on the needs of the organization and the nature of the conversation.

These documents focus on employer-level considerations that emerged from the study, including:

- recruitment and retention dynamics,
- access to and delivery of professional development,
- staff burnout and wellbeing and
- workforce sustainability over time.

They reflect sector-wide patterns and reported experiences, not assessments of individual organizations. The intent is to support reflection, planning and learning—not to evaluate performance.

These handouts are **not**:

- a set of prescriptive recommendations or required actions;
- a checklist or best-practices guide;
- a one-size-fits-all solution to workforce challenges; or
- a substitute for organization-specific planning and decision-making.

Workforce issues within the non-profit housing sector are shaped by many factors, including funding, regional labour markets, organizational structure and community context. These resources are meant to **inform and support**, not dictate responses.

Practice-Informed Recruitment and Retention Strategies

This handout summarizes recruitment and retention strategies that non-profit housing providers and staff reported as effective in their organizations, along with approaches reflected in the supporting literature. These strategies are not best practices nor universally applicable. They are intended as a practical reference that housing societies can adapt based on their size, capacity, location, workforce composition and operational context.

Recruitment Strategies

Creating Awareness

- Create a one-page “day-in-the-life” handout to illustrate the realities of the job for candidates
- Create simple career pathway maps showing how staff can grow within the organization or sector
- Engage youth, students and new graduates through school partnerships, volunteer or shadow opportunities, co-ops, practicums, case competitions and student research collaborations
- Share job postings with post-secondary program coordinators across relevant disciplines (e.g., trades, social services, accounting, HR, building services)
- Use values-based hiring language to attract mission-aligned candidates

Creating Entry Pathways

- Reducing barriers to entry and supporting learning on the job
- Reduce unnecessary training barriers by clearly separating essential and preferred requirements
- Offer on-the-job training where feasible, rather than requiring specific training of applicants
- Cover required pre-employment checks (eg, CRC/VSS) to reduce financial barriers
- Adopt inclusive hiring practices that value transferable skills, values alignment and community knowledge
- Review and adjust recruitment practices and on-the-job training to ensure they are culturally safe
- Partner with other organizations to share service provision for tenants, where appropriate, to reduce recruitment pressures for specialized roles

Hiring Practices and Fit Assessment

- Giving both candidates and employers ways to assess alignment, reduce mismatch and make roles workable in a tight labour market
- Offer optional paid shadow shifts to reduce mismatches between candidate expectations and job realities
- Use fit-focused hiring tools such as values-based interviews, shadow shifts and practicum placements as recruitment pathways
- Explore AI tools to support early screening for role alignment, where appropriate and aligned with organizational capacity
- Offer flexible pay-time trade-offs where possible
- Create referral incentives for existing staff
- Offer pay aligned with a living wage
- For rural and remote recruitment, offer relocation supports, temporary housing solutions, community welcome support and local apprenticeship partnerships

Early Onboarding and Supports

- Provide structured mentorship or buddy systems for new staff, pairing them with experienced colleagues to support learning, confidence and problem-solving in real work contexts
- Offer cross-training opportunities so new staff understand different roles, functions and pressures within the organization, particularly in smaller or rural organizations where staff wear many hats
- Support access to sector-specific training early in employment (e.g., trauma-informed practice, harm reduction, housing systems and sector norms)
- Create opportunities for cohort-based or peer learning (within or across organizations), especially role-based learning that reduces isolation and supports knowledge sharing
- Make career pathways and growth options visible early, even where advancement is gradual, so new staff can see how skills, training and experience connect to future roles in the sector
- Ensure fair and transparent scheduling policies so new frontline staff are not consistently assigned the least desirable or highest-intensity shifts, particularly during their early tenure

Retention Strategies

Leadership & Supervision Practices

- Invest in leadership and supervision training focused on coaching, trauma-informed supervision, feedback and conflict resolution Offer trauma-informed service delivery training for management
- Embrace people's passion for working in the sector by letting them lead projects that matter to them
- Implement exit interviews, or pulse surveys to understand retention risks and adapt supports

Worklife Balance

- Align schedules with school calendars where possible
- Explore childcare partnerships or priority access agreements with local providers
- Offer birthdays off
- Offer flexible schedules so staff can attend to personal responsibilities (e.g. attending child's basketball game, or supporting family members with medical appointments)
- Consider 4-day work weeks options, flex time

Clear Career Growth

- Offer temporary assignments and leadership apprenticeships
- Offer pay increases to incentivize professional development when career progression is not available
- Offer program for employer-paid professional development, with participants committing to stay with the organization for a set period of time
- Bring training opportunities on-site for staff to reduce barriers to attendance
- Offer training opportunities for frontline staff in addition to leadership
- Offer additional professional development training opportunities corresponding to years of service
- Offer secondments during leaves to internal staff to develop skills and try out different roles within organization
- Consider movement between organizations within sector as reciprocal process, rather than poaching, to create opportunities for career growth while keeping staff in the sector

Emotional Labour, Safety & Supports

- Offer post-incident debriefs
- Create peer (role-based) support groups (may need to be same role across multiple organizations, especially for smaller organizations)
- Refresh training on safety planning, risk of violence and de-escalation regularly
- Provide staff with mental health supports
- Include wellness days as part of benefits package
- In rural and remote contexts, provide guidance on ethical boundaries, dual relationships and privacy in small communities

Culture of Staff Appreciation

- Celebrate team and staff successes
- Write thank you notes to staff
- Create a formal staff recognition program
- Form social committees to anchor culture through low-cost events and peer connection
- Host long-service awards accompanied by a small gift for long-term employees
- Host staff retreat days to show appreciation, promote wellness, make personal connections with other staff and develop a sense of belonging

Tips for Housing Societies to Support Professional Development

The following outlines practical strategies that housing societies can use to strengthen access to professional development and support ongoing learning across their organizations. These tips offer options that can help staff build skills, stay current in their roles and grow within the community housing sector.

Reduce Access Barriers

- Budget for backfill coverage while staff are at training
- Offer time during shifts to do modular or online training
- Create virtual role-based support networks for shared learning
- Offer employer-paid professional development
- Consider earn-while-learn model, where staff are hired and then do prerequisite training (paid)
- Coordinate with training programs to create sector-specific micro-credentials, which can be more accessible than certificates and degrees
- Micro-credentials, self-paced, modular and online training opportunities might help improve affordability and accessibility of professional development opportunities
- Backfill positions and offer secondments to people within the sector to learn and share ideas, without having to take time away from work for training
- Seek out Indigenous-led professional development training offerings
- Offer more on the job training opportunities rather than training requirements to apply
- Professional development training needs to have culturally safe and trauma-informed content

Cross-Department Learning

- Run department exchange days
- Pair long-term staff with new staff to provide mentorship
- Offer job shadowing across departments to reduce silos and improve collaboration

Rural/Remote Delivery Models

- Partner with other housing societies or service providers to organize mobile training pods that visit regions regularly with a set menu of in-person training offerings (e.g., safety, de-escalation, building systems)
- Partner with other organizations to offer role-based support networks for shared learning
- Consider train-the-trainer models, where some staff go for off-site training and bring that training back to share with the organization
- Explore virtual reality tools for remote but hands on maintenance training

Incentivize Professional Development

- Offer additional professional development training opportunities corresponding to years of service
- Ensure professional development is linked to career advancement opportunities, or if not possible, more pay
- Consider creating compulsory training on core set of training courses for staff (employer paid)
- Consider internal promotions when openings are available
- Professional development training needs to have culturally safe and trauma-informed content

Create a Culture of Learning

- Prioritize organizational learning (e.g., learning from mistakes and sharing information across departments)
- Do regular staff debriefs to learn from challenging situations
- Create communities of practice to learn from each other for all role types (within an organization or partner with other organizations to find role peers)
- Creating a training officer position, someone who helps staff connect to available training opportunities based on organizational and staff training needs
- Share success stories
- Participate in college community advisory committees to encourage sector-specific curriculum development
- Allow some staff time to teach at local training programs to create sector-specific training locally
- Offer training refreshers regularly to ensure training stays top of mind and is up-to-date
- Consider retention agreements to signal employer support for professional development

Common Training Needs

- Leadership training for management to ensure they are supporting staff well
- Coaching and feedback skills
- Listening skills
- Conflict resolution
- Frontline workers need specific skills training including:
 - Harm reduction
 - Dealing with aggressive behaviors
 - CPR and First Aid
 - Crisis intervention training
 - Naloxone training
 - Non-violent conflict de-escalation
 - Trauma-informed service delivery
- Change management training to help staff navigate changes impacting their work and the sector
- Cultural-safety training
- Training for mental wellness and boundary setting
- Digital literacy
- Ongoing training for soft-skill refreshers (e.g. empathy, communications, etc.)

Emerging Training Needs

- Building maintenance for more high-tech energy efficient equipment
- How to make use of AI in the sector, in an appropriate way
- Doing building maintenance and upgrades with tenants in place to avoid displacement while maintaining and renewing aging buildings
- Alternative sources of capital

Info Sheet for Training Partners: Non-Profit Housing Sector Workforce Training Needs

This Info Sheet summarizes the key skills gaps identified across the non-profit housing sector throughout this study. Addressing these gaps requires sector-specific curricula, regional access and processes to reduce barriers and incentivize training. This information is intended to help organizations, training institutions and sector partners better understand where additional support or training is most needed. By using this overview, housing societies can more effectively plan professional development, improve communication with training providers, tailor training investments and strengthen capacity building across their teams.

Skills Needs

Soft Skills & Practice Competencies

- Psychological safety and vicarious-trauma awareness
- De-escalation, conflict resolution
- Boundary-setting and safety planning
- Empathy
- Relationship-building and communications (verbal, written, plain-language)
- Cultural humility

Operations and Casework

- Trauma-informed practice
- Cultural safety
- Eviction prevention within a rights-based, mission-driven frame (support before enforcement)
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Systems navigation: coordinating across health, social services, income assistance, immigration and justice
- Applications for AI
- Orientation to housing continuum and policy context of non-profit housing

Property Operations, Building Systems and Maintenance

- Building systems literacy (HVAC, hot water, access control, life-safety/alarms, solar/controls), particularly for high-tech equipment
- Preventative maintenance and maintenance triage
- Modern methods of construction
- Portfolio planning
- Property management software
- Tenant-centered property management
- Leadership, Supervision and People Management
- First-time supervisor skills for staff promoted from frontline roles (coaching, feedback, scheduling, delegation)
- Trauma-informed supervision and routine debrief protocols; clinical/peer supervision models
- Work design and workload management in 24/7 settings
- Supervision and leadership in high-stress environments

Delivery Format Considerations

- In-person where possible, but has barriers to participation
- Regional pop-up training (rotating around province)
- Virtual training, but with low bandwidth offerings
- Modular training
- Micro-credentials
- Communities of practice
- Cohort models
- Virtual reality to allow for remote hands-on training
- Training offered at different times of day to reflect 24/7 shift work in sector
- Frontline specific training streams
- On-the-job training/earn-as-you-learn models
- Training offerings with practicum/co-op placements
- Trauma-informed training formats, with embedded wellness supports
- Indigenous-led training
- PLAR
- Curriculum informed by advisory committees so reflects realities of work in sector and stays up-to-date

Regional Considerations

Northern, Rural and Remote Communities

Priority skills:

- Working in cross-functional roles
- Crisis response, safety in small communities
- Ethical practice and professional boundaries in small communities (dual relationships, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, privacy)
- Property and technology maintenance when there is limited access to specialized trades
- Independent decision-making and risk judgment (working with limited on-site supervision or specialist backup)
- Using AI in low bandwidth areas
- Burnout prevention in isolated or high-responsibility roles
- Development in rural and remote settings

Preferred formats:

- In-person, cohort-based, locally delivered or rotating regional training
- Modular training delivered in short blocks
- Hybrid options that do not depend on continuous high-speed internet
- Peer learning and role-based cohorts across organizations
- Remote coaching or technical support to supplement hands-on work (e.g., maintenance or operations support when trades are unavailable)
- Virtual, cross-organizational communities of practice
- Micro-credentials
- Access to standardized, sector-specific orientation and core training modules
- Local apprenticeships and practicum opportunities

Interior/Island and Smaller Urban Centres

Priority Skills:

- Supervising and supporting staff in small-to-mid sized organizations
- Managing emotional labour and burnout with limited internal HR supports
- Coordinating tenant support, operations and administration within lean teams
- Supporting staff career progression where advancement opportunities are limited
- Applying trauma-informed practice across a mix of housing types

Preferred formats:

- Regional, in-person training designed for same-day travel
- Hybrid delivery with limited but purposeful in-person sessions
- Cohort-based learning with peers from similarly sized organizations
- Short, applied sessions focused on specific roles or tasks
- Modular training that staff can complete overtime as coverage allows

Barriers to Training for Prospective and Current Staff in Sector

- Cost of training
- Lack of sector-wide training requirements
- Many people with lived-experience work in sector, but face barriers to accessing formal training
- Costs of covering shifts for staff during training
- Training not accessible during work time for staff reflecting sector's 24/7 shifts
- Personal responsibilities
- Operating around province, including rural and remote areas, making travel for training expensive and time consuming
- Lack of locally available training for those working in rural and remote areas
- Lack of trauma-informed and culturally safe training opportunities
- Lack of Indigenous-led training opportunities
- Funding does not include budgets for employer-paid training
- Limited career growth opportunities in sector's many smaller organizations, so less incentive to take on training
- Low pay that does not correspond to training levels
- Lack of sector-specific training
- Lack of clarity regarding what training will be useful in sector

Info Sheet for Housing Societies: Reducing Barriers to Professional Development

This reflection tool is designed to help housing societies examine how sector-wide barriers to professional development may be showing up within their own organizations and to support discussion about possible ways to address them.

Barrier	Reflection & Discussion Questions
Limited staff coverage for training	How often do staff miss training or choose not to sign up for training due to coverage challenges? Which roles are most affected? What options exist to adjust scheduling, stagger participation, or pilot alternative coverage models?
Part-time, multiple jobs, or non-standard shifts	Which staff groups are least able to participate in training? What relevant training offerings exist that are accessible for staff working part-time or various shifts so they can take training during work time? What changes could improve access for shift-based or part-time roles?
Balancing personal responsibilities if travel is needed to access training	What local, virtual, or modular training options could reduce this barrier?
Training not reflective of non-profit housing realities	Do staff report that training feels generic or disconnected from day-to-day work? How are staff applying what they learn in training into their work?

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Barrier	Reflection & Discussion Questions
Limited access to training outside major urban centres	What regional or hybrid approaches could help? Can organizations in the area partner to bring in relevant trainers to reduce travel for staff?
Frontline staff have fewer training opportunities than management	How is training prioritized across roles? How equitable is access across frontline, supervisory and leadership positions? What training is most needed by frontline staff?
Unclear connection between training and career progression	Do staff understand how training supports skill development or future roles? Are career pathways visible and discussed?
Difficulty knowing which training is relevant or available	How do staff find out about training opportunities? Is responsibility for identifying relevant training clearly defined?
Fatigue, burnout and emotional load	Are workload and emotional demands limiting staff capacity to engage in learning? Are training and supports available that address burnout and emotional labour?
Limited or inconsistent professional development budgets	How predictable is funding for training? How does budget uncertainty affect planning and access?
Concern about retention after employer-funded training	Is this based on evidence or perception? What tools (e.g., learning agreements) could balance staff development and retention?
High workloads limit time to access training	Which operational requirements most often displace training? How are trade-offs between immediate service needs and workforce development made?

FAQ: Addressing Burnout in B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing's Workforce through Training and Professional Development

66%

of workers report experiencing burnout sometimes, often, or extremely often

43%

of frontline workers report frequent secondary or vicarious trauma

34%

of frontline workers report frequent stress related to risk of violence

60%

of workers report working overtime

50%

Half of workers feel their compensation reflects the emotional labour, safety risks and complexity of their work

As B.C.'s non-profit housing sector's workforce works to meet urgent housing demand and support needs, burnout has emerged as a critical workforce challenge, affecting staff well-being, organizational stability and sector sustainability. This fact sheet shares findings from the B.C. non-profit housing sector's labour market study to highlight key causes of burnout and how training and professional development can prevent and address staff burnout.

What causes burnout for staff in the sector?

There are many causes of burnout for staff working in B.C.'s non-profit sector, including systemic causes including systemic causes, workplace challenges and emotional labour of the work:

- High emotional labour and trauma exposure
- Challenging to navigate structures to arrange supports needed by tenants
- Vacancies and understaffing intensifying workload
- Frequent overtime
- Required to take on tasks outside of job descriptions or without adequate training
- Safety risks for staff
- Inconsistent availability of trauma-informed and culturally safe supports for staff

70%

of workers report needing more training to advance in their careers

29%

say unclear advancement opportunities make them consider leaving the sector

What are the Impacts of Burnout for the Sector's Workforce?

- High turnover and reduced retention: 1 in 3 workers do not plan to stay in the sector beyond 5 years
- Recruitment challenges: burnout makes roles harder to fill and contributes to sector reputation challenges
- Relationships with tenants: high staff turnover disrupts relationships with tenants
- Limits to professional development: burnout reduces capacity to build skills internally, impacting competency, safety and service quality

Why Training and Professional Development Are Central to Burnout Prevention

- Without access to adequate training, staff may feel under-qualified for their roles and the situations they face throughout their workday, leading to burnout
- Greatest need for training is identified by frontline staff and staff with lived-experience, but these groups experience greatest barriers to accessing training
- Limited opportunities to build skills and progress professionally contribute to burnout by reducing staff confidence in sustaining long-term careers in the sector

How Training and Professional Development Can Help Reduce Staff Burnout

- Builds staff confidence and competence to manage complex situations
- Reduces emotional strain by improving skills in trauma-informed practice, de-escalation and boundary setting
- Supports staff safety by strengthening risk awareness and preparedness
- Decreases isolation by creating opportunities for peer learning, mentorship and shared problem-solving
- Helps staff feel supported and invested in, rather than expected to cope without preparation
- Enables more effective supervision and debriefing
- Reinforces a sense of professional growth and future in the sector

Training Delivery Considerations

- Delivered in short, modular formats that can fit around shift work and heavy workloads
- Micro-credentials, PLAR options, paid training time and mentorship
- Scheduled to be accessible during paid work time, not reliant on personal time.
- Designed to be role-specific and sector-specific, reflecting the realities of non-profit housing work
- Available in regional, in-person or hybrid formats to reduce travel and isolation, especially outside major urban centres
- Offered through peer learning, mentorship and communities of practice to reduce isolation and support shared problem-solving
- Structured to allow incremental participation over time, rather than one-time or intensive programs
- Delivered with low-bandwidth options where needed to address connectivity limitations
- Provided equitably to frontline staff as well as supervisors and managers, not limited to leadership roles
- Clearly linked to career pathways, skill recognition and internal advancement, even where progression is gradual

What Training Can Support Burnout Prevention

- Trauma-informed practice and understanding vicarious trauma
- De-escalation, conflict resolution and managing risk and safety
- Boundary setting, ethics and professional judgment in complex situations
- Cultural safety and understanding of colonial impacts on housing and service delivery
- Navigating housing, health and social systems overload
- Supervisory skills for supporting staff well-being and managing emotional labour
- Managing workload, prioritization and self-care in high-pressure roles

How Organizations Compare to Sector Trends

This table is intended to help non-profit housing societies reflect on their recruitment, retention and professional development practices in the context of sector-wide workforce findings identified through the Labour Market Challenges and Solutions Study. It provides a structured way for organizations to consider how their experiences align with, or differ from, broader trends across B.C.'s non-profit housing sector.

The purpose of this tool is not to benchmark performance, compare organizations, or establish standards or expectations. Rather, it is designed to support evidence-informed discussion, planning and decision-making at the organizational level.

A contextual comparison helps organizations answer questions such as:

- Are our recruitment and retention pressures unique or widely experienced?
- Are our training challenges aligned with sector-wide barriers, or driven by local or organizational factors?
- Are staff expectations and experiences shaped by broader labour-market conditions?

Workforce Area	Sector-Wide Findings (from this Study)	How Organization Compares to Sector Trends	Organizational Reflection/ Discussion Prompts
Workforce tenure	Nearly half of workers have been in the sector less than 5 years; over one-third have more than 10 years' tenure.		How evenly distributed is experience across roles? Do you have staff to provide mentorship to newer staff?
Intent to leave	1 in 3 workers does not plan to remain in the sector beyond five years; intent is higher among frontline staff.		Are retention risks concentrated in specific roles or teams?

How Organizations Compare to Sector Trends

Workforce Area	Sector-Wide Findings (from this Study)	How Organization Compares to Sector Trends	Organizational Reflection/ Discussion Prompts
Retirement	About 40% of workers are 45+ years.		What are succession plans?
Training need vs access	Frontline staff report the greatest need for training but face the most barriers to accessing it.		Do training opportunities align with where need is greatest?
Primary training barriers	Cost, lack of paid training time, backfill constraints, scheduling and travel are the most frequently cited barriers.		Which of these barriers are most relevant? Are there other barriers to offering training opportunities for staff?
Burnout prevalence	66% of workers report experiencing burnout sometimes, often, or extremely often. 43% of frontline staff report frequent secondary or vicarious trauma.		Does this vary by role? What kind of supports and training are needed to prevent and address staff burnout?
Professional development/ advancement	70% of workers say they need more training to grow their careers.		How visible are development and growth pathways for staff?
Indigenous workforce representation	Approximately 12% of the workforce identifies as Indigenous. Indigenous staff are disproportionately concentrated in frontline roles.		How are Indigenous staff distributed across roles in our organization? Do we operate in a culturally safe way?
Staff with lived-experience	Approximately 30% of the workforce reports lived-experience related to housing insecurity or homelessness. Staff with lived-experience are more likely to be in frontline roles.		How do we recognize, support and develop staff with lived-experience across different roles?